

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7244

INFO USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

T/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 248

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE

CINCLANT

USDOCO AFNORTH KOLSAAS NOR

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT NO

SUBJECT: FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF NEW NORWEGIAN CABINET

REF: OSLO 3819

1. SELECTION OF THE NEW NORWEGIAN CABINET IS MODERATELY REASSURING AS AN INDICATION OF HOW PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE BRATTELI INTENDS TO GOVERN. FOR THE MOST PART HE HAS SELECTED MINISTERS FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF THE LABOR PARTY, AND THERE IS NO OBVIOUS INDICATION THAT HE HAS SOUGHT TO TILT THE GOVERNMENT LEFTWARD IN AN ATTEMPT TO PLACATE THE FAR LEFT.

2. AS FOREIGN MINISTER, 46-YEAR-OLD KNUT FRYDENLUND CAN BE EXPECTED TO PURSUE POLICIES AIMED AT MAINTAINING NORWAY'S CLOSE TIES WITH THE U.S., WITH WESTERN EUROPE, AND WITH NATO, WHILE CONTINUING THE LIBERAL TREND THAT CHARACTERIZED NORWEGIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE FIRST BRATTELI GOVERNMENT (1971-72). FRYDENLUND AS A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER SERVED FOR SOME YEARS AS PRIVATE SECRETARY TO FOREIGN MINISTER HALVARD LANGE. HE LEFT THE FOREIGN SERVICE FOR POLITICS AND ENTERED THE STORTING (PARLIAMENT) IN 1969, SERVING SINCE 1971 AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE. HE IS THUS WELL INFORMED ON THE MAJOR ISSUES WITH WHICH HE WILL NOW BE DEALING. AS CHAIRMAN OF THE LABOR PARTY'S OWN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, FRYDENLUND IS PROBABLY THE PARTY'S LEADING IDEALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY MATTERS. HE IS THUS A SUPPORTER OF LIBERAL CAUSES AND AN ADVODATE OF INTENSIFIED EFFORTS AT DETENTE AND IMPROVED NORWEGIAN RELATIONS WITH THE EAST; HE HAS RETAINED TIES WITH THE PARTY'S YOUTH GROUP AND IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE LIBERAL WING OF THE PARTY, BUT BY NO MEANS ITS PRISONER.

3. RETURNING TO THE CABINET AS DEFENSE MINISTER IS ALV JAKOB FOSTERVOLL, 41, WHO WAS A COMPLETE NEOPHYTE WHEN HE WAS FIRST APPOINTED TO THAT POSITION IN 1971. HE LEARNED CONFIDENTIAL

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QUICKLY, HOWEVER, AND HIS TRIP TO THE U.S. IN THE FALL OF 1971 WAS ESPECIALLY HELPFUL TO HIS EDUCATIONAL PROCESS. AS DEFENSE MINISTER HE SHOWED NO RELUCTANCE IN SPEAKING OUT ON THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE TO NORWAY OF NATO SOLIDARITY IN THE FACE OF THE GROWING SOVIET NAVAL THREAT IN THE NORTH.

WHEN THE BRATTELI GOVERNMENT RESIGNED IN 1972 FOSTERVOLL RETURNED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN THE STORTING; HE WAS REELECTED TO THE STORTING LAST MONTH. (EXCEPT FOR MISSPELLING OF HIS FIRST NAME, DATA ON FOSTERVOLL IN 1972 BIOGRAPHIC HANDBOOK IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT.)

4. APPOINTMENT OF JENS EVENSEN AS MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND SHIPPING IS PORTRAYED BY THE CONSERVATIVE PRESS AS

A CLEAR CONCESSION TO THE ANTI-EC WING OF THE LABOR PARTY. THIS MAY BE CORRECT, BUT IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY DETRACT FROM EVENSEN'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE POSITION. HE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS IN 1971 THAT HE HAD BEEN OFFERED HIS CHOICE OF CABINET POSITIONS IN THE FIRST BRATTELI GOVERNMENT BUT HAD PREFERRED TO STAY ON AS CHIEF OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S LEGAL DEPARTMENT SO THAT HE COULD COMPLETE HIS LANDMARK BOOK ON OIL POLITICS. NOW A RECOGNIZED EXPERT ON OIL MATTERS, HE IS CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL OIL COUNCIL; HE IS ALSO INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FOR HIS ROLE IN LAW OF THE SEA ISSUES. HE DID NOT PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE DURING THE DEBATE ON EC MEMBERSHIP PRECEDING THE 1972 REFERENDUM BUT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AGAINST NORWEGIAN MEMBERSHIP. THIS IS NOT VERIFIABLE, BUT HE WAS IN ANY CASE CHOSEN BY THE KORVALD GOVERNMENT TO BE THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FOR NORWAY'S FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITH THE EC, AN EXPERIENCE WHICH MAKES HIM WELL QUALIFIED TO TAKE OVER NOW AS COMMERCE MINISTER. HE IS A STRONG PERSONALITY, WITH PRONOUNCED IDEALISTIC AND MORALISTIC LEANINGS (HE PROSECUTED THE CASE AGAINST GREECE IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE), AND HE WAS THE LABOR YOUTH GROUP'S CANDIDATE FOR FOREIGN MINISTER.

5. ANOTHER KEY POSITION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF U.S. INTERESTS IS THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES, WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR OIL POLICY. NAMED TO THIS POSITION IS 49-YEAR-OLD INGVALD ULVESETH, A MEMBER OF THE STORTING FROM 1965 TO 1973. HE WAS APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF SOGN OG FJORDANE COUNTY IN 1971
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BUT DID NOT TAKE UP THAT POSITION UNTIL HIS STORTING TERM EXPIRED THIS PAST SUMMER; HE WILL PRESUMABLY NOW TAKE ANOTHER LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM THE GOVERNORSHIP. EDUCATED AS A CIVIL ENGINEER, ULVESETH SHOULD HAVE GAINED ACQUAINTANCE WITH OIL MATTERS BOTH AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE STORTING INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE AND AS A BOARD MEMBER OF NORSK HYDRO.

6. SIX OF THE FIFTEEN MEMBERS OF THE NEW CABINET, INCLUDING BRATTELI, SERVED IN THE PREVIOUS LABOR GOVERNMENT, THOUGH ONLY FOUR (BRATTELI, FOSTERVOLL, AGRICULTURE MINISTER TREHOLT, AND CHURCH AND EDUCATION MINISTER GJERDE) REASSUMED THEIR EARLIER PORTFOLIOS. THERE ARE THREE WOMEN MINISTERS INSTEAD OF ONE IN THE PREVIOUS BRATTELI CABINET, AND THERE IS THE CUSTOMARY ATTEMPT AT GEOGRAPHIC BALANCE WITH THREE MINISTERS FROM NORTH NORWAY. THE TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO) HAS, AS IS TRADITIONAL, ONE PORTFOLIO--LO SECOND SECRETARY TOR HALVORSEN WILL BECOME MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT. ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE NEW CABINET, FISHERIES MINISTER EIVIND BOLLE, IS CLEARLY IDENTIFIED AS AN OPPONENT OF COMMON MARKET MEMBERSHIP; BRATTELI STATED THAT THE THREE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THAT POSITION WERE THAT THE MAN BE FROM NORTH NORWAY, A FISHERMAN, AND AN EC OPPONENT. SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF THE STORTING; THEIR

SEATS WILL NOW BE OCCUPIED BY THEIR ELECTED ALTERNATES.

7. ALSO OF INTEREST ARE SOME OF THE OMISSIONS FROM THE NEW CABINET. LABOR PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN REIULF STEEN, A FRONT RUNNER FOR THE POSITION OF FOREIGN MINISTER, WITHDREW AT THE LAST MINUTE AND WILL BE LEFT IN CHARGE OF THE LABOR PARTY OFFICE. THIS REOPENS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER STEEN IS BEING GROOMED TO SUCCEED BRATTELI AS PARTY CHAIRMAN AND PRIME MINISTER. TWO OF THE STRONGEST LABOR PARLIAMENTARIANS AND MEMBERS OF THE FIRST BRATTELI CABINET WERE LEFT OUT OF THE CABINET THIS TIME BECAUSE OF THE TOUGH TASKS FACING BRATTELI IN THE STORTING. ODVAR NORDLI, FORMER MINISTER OF LABOR AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS, HAS BEEN CHOSEN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER, AND RAGNAR CHRISTIANSEN, FORMER FINANCE MINISTER, WILL BE HIS DEPUTY.

8. PENDING FULLER INFORMATION ON A FEW UNKNOWNNS, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT BRATTELI HAS PUT TOGETHER AS GOOD A CONFIDENTIAL

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